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THE CRAYON.

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COMMEMORATIVE ORATION UPON JEAN PAUL.

BY LUDWIG BÖRNÉ.

Pronounced in the Museum at Frankfort, Dec. 2, 1825.

Translated for the CRAYON by REV. C. T. BROOKS.

A STAR has set, and the eye of this century will close before it reappears; for the light of Genius moves in a far sweeping orbit, and only the late grandchildren will welcome with gladness him from whom sorrowing fathers once parted in tears. And a crown is fallen from the head of a king! And a sword in the hand of a leader; and a high-priest is dead! Well may we mourn for him, who was a reparation to us, and whose loss to us is now irreparable. To every land there has been given for every sad deficiency some kindly compensation. The north, without heart, has its iron strength; the sickly south its golden sun; the sombre Spain its faith; the starving French have a profuse wit to refresh them, and England's fog is gilded with liberty.

We had Jean Paul, and we have him no longer, and in him we have lost what in him only we possessed—strength and gentleness and faith and radiant humor and unfettered speech. This is the star which has set—the heavenly faith which in the departed one shone upon us. This is the crown which has fallen—the crown of that love which ruled him who wore it, as well as all who were his subjects. This is the sword which is broken—the satire in a keen hand, before which kings tremble and which makes bloodless courtlings blush. And this is the high-priest—he who prayed for us in the temple of Nature: he is gone hence, and our devotion has no interpreter more. We will mourn for him whom we have lost, and for those others who have not lost him. Not for all has he lived! But a time will come, when he will be born to all, and all will weep for him. But he stands patiently at the gate of the twentieth century, and waits smiling till his lagging people shall come up with him. Then shall he lead the weary and hungry into the city of his love; he shall gather them under a veritable roof; the high-born, of fastidious taste, into the palace of the lofty Albano; but the unsophisticated into the narrow cottage of his Siebenkäs, where the busy Lenette presides at the hearth, and the hot, stinging master of the house stuffs German dishes with grains of pepper.

Centuries decline, seasons roll by, the weather of fortune changes; the steps of age go up and down. Nothing but mutability is enduring, nothing fixed but death. Every heart-beat inflicts a wound upon us, and life would be a perpetual bleeding to death, if it were

not for Poesy. She secures to us what Nature denies—a golden age that never tarnishes, a spring that never withers, cloudless prosperity and everlasting youth. The Poet is the comforter of humanity; such he is, when Heaven itself makes him its plenipotentiary, when God sets his seal upon his forehead, and when he disdains to sell the heavenly message for the paltry messenger's reward. So was it with Jean Paul. He sang not in the palaces of the great, he sported not with his lyre at the tables of the rich. He was the poet of the low-born, he was the singer of the poor, and where the children of sorrow wept, there were heard the sweet tones of his harp. Although we are fain to pay the tribute of our reverence to the stately bell, which sounds majestically on extraordinary feast days—our love is given to the familiar watch, which accompanies every pulsation of our heart, which strikes every quarter of an hour of our joys, and takes from us, minute by minute, all our sorrows.

In countries only cities are counted; in cities only towers, temples and palaces; in houses their masters; in a nation societies; and in these their leaders. Before all seasons of the year spring is caressed; the traveller gazes at broad roads and streams and Alps; and what the mass admire, the complacent poets praise. Jean Paul was no flatterer of the multitude, no servant of custom. Through narrow, choked-up paths he sought out the despised village. He counted in a people the persons, in towns the roofs, and under every roof each heart. For him all seasons bloomed, they all bore him fruit. Even the poorest poet, and though only one string was left to jangle on his miserable lyre, has sung the festal days of the first love. Jean Paul tends this holy flame, till it is quenched in death. At every golden wedding he is the officiating priest, who brings the aged hearts once more together, and joins the trembling hands for the last time, before death severs them. Through mists and storms, and over frozen rivers he makes his way into the snow-penetrated hut of a village schoolmaster, to share the Christmas joys of his children. With full ringing strains he sings the royal pleasures on the blissful islands of Lago Maggiore; but with tenderer and warmer tones the narrow happiness of a German parson in his jubilee, and the joys of a Swedish pastor.

For freedom of thinking Jean Paul fought side by side with others; in the battle for freedom of feeling he stands alone. Singular, eccentric creatures that we are! With almost greater anxiety do we seek to hide our love than even our hatred, and we shun almost as fearfully the appearance of goodness as we avoid among

thieves the display of riches. How often it happens that in the market-place of life's daily transactions, or in the halls of commonplace prattle, we bestow upon all the weighty, mature things, which are there carried on, here talked about, a feigned attention! We appear composed and are moved, appear wide awake and are lulled with sweet pleasure, we go with considerate step and our heart plunges from recollection to recollection, and we roam on with long strides among the flower-beds of our childhood, and lift ourselves on the wings of fancy to the evening clouds of our sunken youth. How anxiously then thou listenest on all sides, lest some eye detect thee, lest some ear should catch the still sighs of thy breast! Then Jean Paul comes close to thee and whispers smilingly: "I know thee!" Thou concealest thy joys because they seem to thee too childish for the sympathy of the dignified; thou shuttest up thy sorrows in thy own bosom, because they seem to thee too small for pity. Jean Paul finds thee out and thy stolen rapture, and says: "Come, play with me!" He steals into the chamber where thou weepest in solitude, throws himself on thy heart, and says: "I come to weep with thee!" Does some childlike propensity slumber and dream in thy breast, and does it wake up, there stands Jean Paul by its cradle, and perhaps it was only his songs which had lulled thy heart into such sleep and such dreams. Not as others have done, does he spy out the *secret* deserts in human hearts; he seeks therein the hidden Paradises. He loosens the outer bark from the hardened breast and shows the tender coating under it; and in the ashes of a burnt-out heart he finds the last, half-dead spark, and kindles it to a glowing flame of love. Therein has he been a benefactor, a saviour to his people! There was a time when no German youth, if he loved, dared to say: I love thee! Conventional and proper as he was, he said: *We* love thee, maiden! Trained up in the Espalier of the State-wall, twined around the pole of inherited custom, he had learned not to trust his own roots. Jean Paul encouraged these timid hearts, he first dared to speak out that word so odious to every German, the word "I;" and if freedom consists, not in living without laws, but in every one's being his own lawgiver, Jean Paul it was who sowed for our children's children the seed of German liberty.

Jean Paul was the poet of Love, in the finest and noblest sense of which the word is capable. Once in his youth he swore this oath: "Great Genius of Love! I revere thy holy heart, in whatever dead or living language, with whatever tongue, whether the fiery tongue of an angel or a heavy one; it may speak, and never will I ignore thee, whether thou dwellest in a narrow Alpine valley or in a hut of Scotland, or amidst the splendor of the world; whether thou bestowest spring-times upon mortals or lofty errors, or a modest wish, or takest all, all away from them!" He swore this oath,

and he kept it to his dying day. And yet, what is Love without Justice? The generosity of the robber who gives to one what he takes from another. Jean Paul was also a Priest of the Right. Love was to him a holy flame, and Right the altar on which it burned, and he brought her none but pure offerings. He was a moral singer. Never did he adorn ugly sin with the flowers of his rhetoric; never did he disguise base emotion with the gold of his speech. He could have done it had he been willing to; he could even, with his mighty magic, have coaxed a smile from the pious censor; but he never did. He strove for truth, for right, for freedom, and never, with him, did the flag of a mighty name cover sinful and unwholesome goods to smuggle them through for the unbelieving.

To comfort them who hungered for solace and as a fructifying heaven to refresh thirsty souls—not for this alone was the poet sent. He must also be the judge* of humanity, and the lightning and the tempest which cleanse the earth of mist and mold. Jean Paul was a thunder-god in his anger, a bloody whip in his punishments; when he scorned, he showed good teeth. Who-so had to fear his mockery, would always fly from him; to meet and deride him, no one was bold enough for that. Let Giant Pride come forth ever so defiant against him, his sling hit him without fail! Let slyness slink away into its darkest hole, he threw fire into it, and the blinded deceiver was forced to surrender. His shot was good, his eye better, his hand sure. He loved to exercise it, setting on his wit into the dark places of courts and of Germany. Not for the spoils of the chase did he wish; he wanted only to guard piously the fields of the citizen and the acres of the countryman from devastation. We might tell of the feathers of many a bird of prey, of the antlers and claws of many a slain beast of game; but let us not be enticed into any stories of huntsmen's prowess in these good fence-months, when it is an indictable offence even to take down a rifle from the wall.

Freedom and Equality, Humor and Christianity † teach—both in vain. Jean Paul, too, might have taught and sung in vain, were not Right a dear image of dead profession and Hope a flatterer of poverty. Jean Paul was a good painter, he flattered us delicately. Humor is not a gift of the intellect, but of the heart; it is Virtue's self, as a richly endowed heart practises it in teaching, not daring to teach it by practice. The humorist is the court fool of the King of Beasts, in an evil time, when truth dares not sound like a holy bell, when one allows her only the little bells that tinkle, because one despises them and derides them. The humorist looses the bandage from the feet of Saturn, puts the master's hat upon the slave, and announces the feast of saturnalia, when the mind serves the heart and the heart makes

* *Richter* in German, Jean Paul's own name.

† *Börn* was a Jew.

a mock of the mind. Once there was a fairer time, when humor was not known, because sorrow was not known nor longing. Life was an Olympic game, where every one could try his strength and speed. Weakness found only the goal forbidden to it, not the lists: the prize denied to it, not the contest. Jean Paul was the Jeremiah of his captive people. The wail is hushed, the woe is left. For we will not hear those false prophets who accompanied and have followed him; and only out of love for the beloved dead will we mention his sickly imitators with more than the fewest words. They fancy themselves free because they rattle their chains; brave because they rage in their prison, and magnanimous because they rail at their jailer. They ply from head to heart, and from heart to head—now here and now there; but the abyss remains; they never knew how to build the slightest bridge over the chasms of life. Dislocation is to them pliability of limbs, distortion expressiveness of countenance, they jingle boastfully their leaden pennies as if they were gold pieces, and if by chance some shipwreck throws a jewel into their laps, they know how to use it cleverly, and one sees them, like that young chief of the savages, wear a cross of St. Lewis in their ear-flap.

Admiration praises, Love is dumb. We will not praise Jean Paul, we will weep for him! The merry guest forgets over the feast the entertainer, the heartless friend of art forgets the artist in his work. True, he is praised as grateful who recounts enjoyed benefits; but he is the most grateful who forgets the benefit to remember only the benefactor. So will we lovingly commemorate the sainted spirit, not the labors and works wherewith he has earned our admiration. And we could not, if we would, do otherwise. One can enumerate Jean Paul's works, not estimate them. The treasures he has left behind him, are not all coined gold which one has only to pile away. We find bars of gold and silver, jewels, naked precious stones, medals, which the grocer refuses as payment; stored, unground bread-fruit, and acres enough on which the latest grandchildren shall yet reap. Such riches have made many a criticism poor. Fullness has been scolded at as overloading, generosity as prodigality! Because he possessed as much gold as others had tin, he has been charged with vanity for eating and drinking daily out of golden vessels. But if Jean Paul erred herein, who was to blame for it? When great riches come down to a family by inheritance through many generations, then familiarity induces moderation in enjoyment; plenty is regulated; everything has its appropriate place assigned it, and over every splendor is drawn the curtain of taste. But the poor man whom fortune surprises, for whom the naked walls with magic rapidity are covered with high pier-mirrors, for whom the god of wine suddenly fills the empty casks—he staggers from one apartment to another, he revels in the cup of joy, gives unreflect-

ingly with full hands, and dazzles because he is dazzled. Such an upstart was Jean Paul; he had inherited nothing from his people. Heaven bestowed upon him its favor; fortune in a kindly mood emptied its horn of plenty, and showered upon him flowers and fruits; the earth gave him her hidden treasures. He saw and showed them all so gladly! But what the envy of his contemporaries laughs at, makes the heirs laugh for joy. Gold remains gold, even in the ore, known to few only, and the setting of the jewel enhances its price but not its worth.

Such was Jean Paul! Do you ask where he was born, where he lived, where his ashes rest? From heaven he came, on the earth he lived, our hearts are his grave. Would you hear of the days of his childhood, of the dreams of his youth, of the years of his manhood? Ask the boy Gustavus, ask the youth Albano, and the vigorous Schoppe. Do you seek to know his hopes? In the *Campanian Vale** you find them.

No hero, no poet, has indicated such true information about his life as Jean Paul has done. The spirit has fled, the word remains! He has gone back to his home; and in whatever heaven he may be wandering, on whatever star he may dwell, he will never in his glorification forget his familiar earth, nor his dear fellow-men, who played and wept with him, and loved and endured as did he.

It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature, but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature which are most proper for imitation: greater care is still required in representing life, which is so often discolored by passion or deformed by wickedness. . . . It is, therefore, not a sufficient vindication of a character, that it is drawn as it appears; for many characters ought never to be drawn: nor of a narrative, that the train of events is agreeable to observation and experience. . . . There have been men indeed splendidly wicked, whose endowments threw a brightness on their crimes, and whom scarce any villainy made perfectly detestable, because they never could be wholly divested of their excellences; but such have been in all ages the great corrupters of the world, and their resemblance ought no more to be preserved, than the art of murdering without pain. . . . While men consider good and evil as springing from the same root, they will spare the one for the sake of the other, and in judging, if not of others, at least of themselves, will be apt to estimate their virtues by their vices. To this fatal error all those will contribute, who confound the colors of right and wrong, and, instead of helping to settle their boundaries, mix them with so much art, that no common mind is able to disunite them. . . . It is therefore to be steadily inculcated that virtue is the highest proof of understanding, and the only solid basis of greatness; and that vice is the natural consequence of narrow thoughts; that it begins in mistake, and ends in ignominy.—*Johnson*.

COARSENESS of mind disregards, or rather is incapable of seeing, aptitudes; and often, measuring everything by wealth, makes the great mistake of fancying nothing too good for it which it can pay for.—*Boyes*.

* His last work.